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ABSTRACT

Assessment of students' progress and learning is "sine qua non" to effective curricula and instruction. Assessing what students know and can do as well as analyzing their attitudes, behaviors, and interests have become an integral part of planning curricula which are responsive to and supportive of students' educational needs and learning. The purpose of this paper is to discuss student learning outcomes in teaching intercultural communication, provide important information concerning students' portfolios, and identify several factors influencing the assessment process. The focus is on portfolio assessment which combines both formal and informal procedures of assessment and consists of finding out and keeping track of students' progress and learning in the intercultural communication course. Various methods of collecting assessment data as well as major factors affecting the assessment process are discussed. The results of using portfolio assessment in this course reveal that students seem to learn a great deal about intercultural communication and enjoy themselves while learning. An appendix provides a student checklist of intercultural communication indicators. (Contains 17 references.) (Author/RS)

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# Assessing Student Learning Outcomes in Teaching Intercultural Communication

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**Abstract**

Assessment of students' progress and learning is sine qua non to effective curricula and instruction. Assessing what students know and can do as well as analyzing their attitudes, behaviors, and interests have become an integral part of planning curricula which are responsive to and supportive of students' educational needs and learning. The purpose of this paper is to discuss student learning outcomes in teaching intercultural communication, provide important information concerning students' portfolios, and identify several factors influencing the assessment process. The focus is on portfolio assessment which combines both formal and informal procedures of assessment and consists of finding out and keeping track of students' progress and learning in the intercultural communication course. Various methods of collecting assessment data as well as major factors affecting the assessment process are discussed. The results of using portfolio assessment in this course reveal that students seem to learn a great deal about intercultural communication and enjoy themselves while learning.

# Assessing Student Learning Outcomes in Teaching Intercultural Communication

## Introduction

Increased public awareness and litigation in the past two decades have led to the enactment of numerous laws guaranteeing every American equal access to education. These laws have ensured the rights of the public in the assessment and educational programming processes. Public awareness has also led boards of regents across the nation to call for student assessment and teacher accountability in higher education. Thus, ongoing student assessment and teacher accountability have been linked to effective teaching and public satisfaction.

Assessment involves more than just administering tests and tabulating results. It is not simply imposed on students, but rather approached as a communicative process. It is a method of inquiry, an ongoing process that results in all parties giving and obtaining information about students strengths and weaknesses as well as about educational programs and teaching methods. It is used continuously to monitor students and make instructional decisions. It is not used to control their minds and hearts or force them to accept a worldview held by those who draft the curriculum and write the textbooks.

Another concept, which is closely related to assessment, is accountability for the public dollars that are being spent on education. Many public teachers do not seem to concern themselves or show any regard for accountability - a concept which is not

difficult for ordinary folks to grasp, and, thus, they wonder why the public hold them in such low regard. As such, traditional assessment methods are not enough anymore to reflect student learning and progress in the classroom. One or two-shot large-scale measures cannot provide detailed and timely information for teacher accountability concerning student achievement. Thus, teachers have to to look for new ways to assess students and facilitate their learning. While tests are extremely important and constitute a major part of the assessment process, other methods of assessment, such as frequent interviews, observations, individual reports, term papers, structured learning exercises have been found equally, if not more, important. Teachers' future, like politicians, will be determined by what they actually do, not what they promise to do. And public satisfaction is highly dependent on teachers' excellent performance. That is why board of regents have been urging schools to "get the yardstick" in measuring teachers' performance and compensate them accordingly. Because of that evaluation of teachers' performance by their students, peers, and supervisors have increased lately as a response to that concern.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to discuss student learning outcomes in teaching Intercultural Communication (ICC), provide important information about students' portfolios, and identify important factors which are affecting student assessment and learning. Assessment is any systematic ground for making inferences about student learning and the effectiveness of educational

programs by using various sources of information. It is the global process of synthesizing data about people in order to understand and describe them better; rather than the equivalent to testing (Brown, 1983; Lescher, 1995). Researchers have agreed that, for effective teaching to take place, assessment must provide information concerning what and how to teach. To reach that goal, effective teachers have been developing and implementing systematic plans for collecting and using assessment data on a continuing basis (Belanoff, P. & Dickson, M., 1991; Evans, S. S., Evans, W. H., & Mercer, C. D., 1986; Mallory, B. L. & New, R. S., 1994; Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D., McTighe, J., 1993; McAfee, O. & Leong, D., 1994; Lescher, M. L., 1995; Paris, S. G. & Ayres, L. R., 1994). Assessment methods which may help students to think, analyze their own work, and teach themselves independently have been welcome and encouraged.

**Using Portfolios in the (ICC) Course**

Formal tests were the first methods used for assessment by faculty. These tests are quick to administer, easy to score, and produce reliable statistics for comparison purposes. However, these methods, whenever used alone, may lead to cultural bias and put certain students at a disadvantage. To only rely on such tests for measuring achievement is clearly inappropriate for universities that are supposed to serve the needs of various students. The convenience of formal tests should not blind teachers about the fact that students come from different cultural and subcultural backgrounds and cannot be denied their college degree on such a

basis alone (Evans, Evans, & Mercer, 1986).

The time constraints imposed by formal tests may create more problems. A rigid time frame for tests may affect those who think and work at different paces. Time limits are especially difficult for bilingual students, a vital consideration in test selection for a diverse student population. These reservations about timed tests have been of great concern to many instructors across the nation.

For these reasons and because portfolios combine both formal and informal procedures to assess student performance, portfolio assessment was chosen for the ICC course. While formal test data may be used to indicate the student's general strengths and weaknesses, a stronger emphasis is placed upon collecting data continuously from other important instructional settings. This is often accomplished by using informal assessment procedures. Informal procedures sample skills and behaviors relevant to the curriculum. A continuous analysis of the student is the goal, and normative comparisons are not made. The results from informal tests may be used to assess specific curriculum objectives. Informal assessment procedures may consist of careful observations of students behaviors while being tested; marking certain items on checklists; reporting on assigned readings; and engaging in dyadic and group discussions. Using informal methods of assessment in conjunction with formal test data can lead to a precise educational analysis of each student. At the same time, students learn more and enjoy themselves while learning. This can be evident in their course evaluations at the end of each semester.

Lescher (1995) identified several important characteristics which lie at the root of all assessment portfolios. Assessment portfolios are 1) systematic collections wherein both students and teachers can contribute and track down evolution of students' skills, achievement, and progress over time. 2) Active rather than stagnant and, by nature, they are changing. They actively and periodically involve students in the creation, assessment, evaluation, and revision of their portfolio entries. 3) Portfolios are also joint responsibilities and resources wherein teachers, learners, and administrators share the burden of collecting, assessing, and communicating information on a continuous basis. 4) Assessment and instruction have a reciprocal relationship. By incorporating data into classroom practice, teachers can empower themselves and their students. Assessment and instruction become cyclical and, thus, teaching and learning are greatly enhanced. 5) Portfolios are multi-dimensional. They can document progress in the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of students. They may include written entries in various forms. Knowing certain skills in ICC and applying those skills are two different things. The element of observing students apply those skills in their daily activities and behaviors can provide important assessment data to be included in portfolios. 6) Portfolios have an element of authenticity by including real life and purposeful activities. Being active participants in the process of choosing and eliminating specific entries, students can provide real information about their development and progress. 7) Portfolios are flexible

and evolving which means that they can vary from one instructor to another. Teachers do not have to include the same entries for all of their students in a classroom. Each student is different and can have a different portfolio.

Thus, Portfolios inform instructors about each student work without comparing the student to a certain standard. This way portfolios can help teachers reward students and encourage them to improve rather than punish them just because they did not live up to certain standards which are devised by a group of individuals without any regard for students differences. As such, portfolios become essential tools to inform teaching and improve learning. This implies that assessment must be an on-going process instead of a single event at the conclusion of instruction.

Rather than waiting until the end of the ICC course to assess students, I employ formative assessment at the beginning of the term to determine students' prior knowledge. I, then, assess regularly through the course of study to obtain information to help me adjust my teaching based on the learning needs of the students. Assessment results can inform me about the effectiveness of my teaching and the degree of student learning. By using performance-based assessments, I make my evaluative criteria explicit in advance to serve as a focus for both instruction and evaluation. I provide regular feedback to students based on the identified criteria and allow students to revise their work based on this feedback. Students also realize that their assessment assists in evaluating educational programs and methods of teaching.

**Methods of Collecting Assessment Information**

Several means have been used to collect assessment data. First, a checklist, which is an organizational tool to help me synthesize data about students and identify stages of development and progress in class, constitutes a significant element of each student's portfolio. A checklist of ICC indicators is an easy form which allows me to document progress on a monthly basis (see appendix A). This record will show when a student mastered a specific behavior or acquired a skill.

Second, Journal Writing. A journal is a periodical record wherein students write observations, feelings, insights, and judgment about their work, daily interactions, and themselves in general. Thus, self-assessment is also incorporated through keeping a journal and selecting any entries to be included in their portfolios. Journals aid students to reflect on their work and document growth and progress. They are powerful tools which provide invaluable qualitative and quantitative data that are sine qua non to the assessment process. Research findings have suggested that journals can play an important role in the assessment process of students (Donohoe, 1992; Graves & Sunstein, 1992; Goodman & Hood, 1989; Milz, 1990; Tierney, Carter, & Desai, 1991). Every week students are asked to add a new entry concerning ICC to their portfolios. This helps students reflect on what has been discussed in the class, consider something that has happened with them, write a short essay on it, and include it in their portfolios.

Third, Structured Learning Exercises (SLEs) are dyadic or

small group activities, relevant to class materials, and designed to help students master certain skills. SLEs constitute a major part of students assessment and are included in their portfolios. These data encourage them to take more responsibility for their work and learning.

Fourth, Conferences with Students. Meeting individually with students to listen to their concerns and discuss their progress in their work can be very rewarding. Taking notes of conference discussions in order to include them in students' portfolios can be helpful in terms of going back to them in future conferences. As Milz (1990) noted, teachers should see themselves as participants and facilitators rather than managers or directors by modeling behaviors which respect individuality, team effort, contributions from all learners, continuous learning and growth. For instance, I tell students that nobody is perfect; making mistakes in front of others is a natural thing; admitting mistakes can be a virtue; and learning to correct those mistakes is a part of the overall learning process and not just something to be avoided. Tierney, Carter, & Desai (1991) said that instructing and assessing are interactive, collaborative, and, therefore, inseparable processes. Thus, time should be allocated to discuss topics of importance, have small group activities, dyadic interactions, and individual student-teacher conferences. More importantly, teachers must be resposible for designing a flexible, yet structured, class schedule (Lescher, 1995).

Fifth, while informal observation can lead to a great deal of

data concerning students learning and mastery of specific skills, formal assessment through several in-house or take-home tests as well as writing term papers can provide valuable additional data which help me assess each student progress over time and during the whole semester. As students display increasing control over their ICC skills, I try to involve them in the decision making process concerning different ways of taking tests and other types of evaluation. Involving students in their learning and evaluative strategies help them understand themselves better, evaluate their own progress, work habits, and achievements. Thus, using formal and informal procedures of assessment are fair to students and give a better picture of the overall learning process.

**Facts About Teaching ICC**

At the beginning of each term a pretest and an oral report concerning ICC are used to indicate what general ICC skills students know. This assists me in providing a clear idea of their knowledge and focusing on aspects that require more attention. The same test and oral report are given at the end of the term in order to measure how much they learned. It has been my experience that, at the university level, students are better served if teachers teach them to teach themselves. Portfolio assessment is the method which helps to accomplish this objective. It enhances students' learning and improve teaching practices. It can highlight process and product, value effort and improvement, and continually engage students in self-reflection (Lescher, 1995; Tierney, Carter, & Desai, 1991)).

Evaluating a varied collection of the student's college work has enabled me to assess each student's efforts in a number of different areas. It has allowed me to evaluate student reasoning, analyzing and/or synthesizing information, their library research techniques along with their organizational and syntactical skills, besides their ICC skills. Another advantage to using portfolio assessment has been the ability to identify major factors influencing the assessment process and set high performance standards in communication skills for both the students exhibiting these skills and me, as a faculty teaching them. Since these skills would be taught and experienced in a realistic time framework with ample opportunities, they could be judged much more rigorously than timed tests. Such expectations of work would encourage classroom practice in speaking as well as writing, thus benefiting both me and students. My students have a say in the type of questions and type of test to take. They write fifty percent of the questions for their own tests. Their portfolios reflect their entire learning experience in the ICC course rather than two-single shot measures, mid-term and final.

The ICC classroom is constituted of graduate and undergraduate students from different macro and micro-cultures. Therefore, a multicultural factor, besides other factors, is considered in their assessment. Since culture has a pervasive effect on how to think, view the world, and act, and since it promotes certain values and dictates standards of behavior, universities take on the values deemed significant by society. These values, however, are heavily

weighted in favor of the White majority in the US society. In the US pluralistic society, each social group may dictate a somewhat different set of values. Rules, procedures, standards of behavior, curriculum, and even assessment procedures reflect the social and cultural values of the White majority. This can cause certain problems. For instance, a problem can occur when a student's behavior deviates from the accepted standards. Thus, students' cultural backgrounds are taken into consideration for assessment purposes in the ICC classroom.

Another aspect of leading the ICC course is that students are asked to read each unit of instruction and some other related materials prior to discussing the unit. At the start of each unit, I, along with the students, collaborate to briefly remind the class of what was discussed in the previous unit. Then an outline of the new unit is shown on the chalkboard or an overhead projector and students take turns asking and answering questions concerning the new unit. Those who read the unit raise their hands and speak quite often which encourages other students to do the same in other units. What students already know about each unit can be extremely helpful in terms of learning from each other and directing my attention to provide any additional information to complete the discussion of the unit. Obtaining information about students' prior knowledge concerning the topic of instruction in each unit is a prerequisite to effective interaction and teaching in the classroom. I often use brief written and oral quizzes to determine if students have learned unit material and can apply instructed

skills. This provides me with valuable information to adjust instruction and be more effective.

Students are always reminded that each one is a student and teacher at the same time; that everyone's opinions are accepted and respected whether they agree or disagree with my own opinions. This shows them relative equality, respect, and acceptance in addition to being responsible for what takes place in the classroom and their overall teaching and learning from each other.

**Interpreting and analyzing portfolios**

Gathering data without careful interpretation and analysis is a waste of time. While interpreting and analyzing portfolios, I try, as Lescher (1995) suggested, to ask and attempt to answer some important questions: 1) what do these work samples indicate about the student's learning level in ICC? 2) How has the student progressed compare to what the student knew about these skills in the past? 3) Which pieces of information the student self-selected, and why? 4) What areas are evident as strengths, and which ones seem to need further improvement? 5) What are the instructional implications which can be revealed from the collected data for the individual student and the class? And 6) what goals seem appropriate?

As data collection continues, I take time out every week to look for trends in skill and strategy development, and make notes about each student. This work has actually sharpened my listening and learning from students. Everything they do or every piece of work in their portfolios tells something about them. Portfolio

assessment is student centered, for it attempts to describe each student's unique pattern of progress without comparing him or her to others in the class. It is concerned with an individual student's abilities in relation to universal pattern of progress toward goals, not just with the student standing in relation to other students. Portfolio assessment is also multidimensional, for it considers students' intellectual, social, emotional, and physical characteristics and behaviors and uses various methods and sources in order to reach a better understanding of their learning and achievements.

All the major decisions that influence students' progress in ICC are based on assessment information. Assessment is done for accountability purposes toward students and for more effective teaching and personal satisfaction. To aid in determining students' instructional needs, assessment data have been assisting me in determining what to teach and providing insight as to how to teach. To carry out assessment for what to teach and how to teach, I use a systematic plan for collecting and using assessment data. First, I determine the skills and behaviors to be assessed. To communicate all the information needed for assessment, I state behavioral objectives which may identify the target behavior (outcome), the conditions under which the behavior is to be displayed, and the criteria for acceptable performance. Second, I select and administer an assessment procedure, either periodic or continuous. Periodic assessment procedures may be either formal or informal and yield global information. Continuous assessment procedures yield

formative data and are used to supplement and expand the information obtained in periodic assessment procedures. A periodic test is often administered prior to beginning an instructional program. Third, I record performance and set objectives. If students are experiencing educational problems, I collect data on a continuous basis. This allows for changes in student performance to be immediately noticed and instructional programs to be altered to ensure students progress. The two major assignments which assess and explain whether or not students met expected outcomes are pre/post test and individual report concerning ICC experience and skills. The results have been very significant for a period of three years. Other than the differences between students' mean scores and individual reports at the beginning and end of each semester, their evaluations of the course and the way it has been taught have been very good to excellent without any exception. Portfolio assessment along with students' evaluations have helped to identify some important factors which affect student learning and assessment.

**Major Factors Influencing The Assessment Process**

An important result of assessment was identifying major sets of factors affecting assessment. These factors are: individual, environmental, relational, instructional, and reinforcement.

**A. Individual Factors**

Motivation. Effective instruction may be fostered by including techniques which may enhance student motivation. Adelman and Taylor (1983) said, "If a student is motivated to learn something, she/he

often can do much more than anyone would have predicted was possible." (p. 384). Thus, focusing on motivation, rather than on academic development, becomes essential. Determining how to teach can be based on what successfully motivates students.

Interest. Interest in teacher and/or topic of instruction is a strong motivator for students to attend and actively participate in what goes-on in the classroom. Students will generally accept things that are of great interest to them and vice versa. Students who are not interested in their teacher and/or the topic of discussion do not attend regularly, and whenever they do, they stay calm and do not contribute to any discussion, even when called upon to say something. Therefore, as Zigmond, Vallecorsa, and Silverman (1983) stated, information about students' interests can be very helpful in selecting materials. Then, assessing students' level of interest in the course becomes essential to tailor lessons suiting that level of interest and engage students in the learning process.

Expectancies. One's anticipated outcomes of scholastic and academic activities may influence one's attitude, behavior, motivation, and learning outcomes. Expectancies can function as incentives or deterrents for learning or avoiding any instructional task. For instance, if a student expects to get an "A" in a certain course, the student will work much harder than if he or she expects to get a "C." Assessing students' expectations for learning is an important element in helping teachers plan for positive instructional experiences for students.

**B. Environmental Factors**

Physical setting. The physical setting of a classroom such as, arrangement of seats, size of the room, colors, and general decor can influence the attitudes of students. There must be ample space for students to sit in groups and perform certain activities in a comfortable manner. Arrangement of seats must be conducive to cooperative learning. Forming a circle has been my favorite seating position for students wherein direct interaction among us all as well as concentration on the topic of discussion take place. The physical setting can definitely affect the way to teach as well as the attitudes and behaviors of the students.

Temperature. The temperature of the classroom can also affect students attitudes, behaviors, and motivation level to learn. Cool temperatures are more conducive to students concentration on suject, whereas warm temperatures make them feel drowsy and less motivated to actively participate in any discussion. Therefore, surveying students about the degree of temperature which make them feel more comfortable and attentive in the classroom and trying to secure it can be critical.

Lighting. Soft versus bright lights may affect teaching and learning. Some individuals are light-sensitive and prefer less bright lights, while others find themselves more comfortable working under bright-lighted areas. Assessing students needs concerning lighting can be helpful in terms of adjusting lights to what may lead to active participation and better performance.

Noise. Noise is also a factor which may distract students from

paying attention to classroom discussions. Eliminating nearby noise of any kind is the responsibility of teachers to enhance attention and concentration on topics of discussion.

**C. Relational Factors**

Student-parent. Out-of-classroom relationships, especially student-parent relationship, may have a great bearing on student instruction. Parents are great contributors to their children's academic success or failure. Creating a supportive or negative climate of interaction at home depends, to a large extent, on parents. A supportive climate of communication between parents and children can be a key factor in motivating children to achieve. However, a negative climate is likely to harm children's desire to achieve and may destroy their interest in school as a whole. Thus, knowing the type of a student-parent relationship and assessing its effect on the student academic achievement may be essential.

Student-peer. Peers constitute an important element in one's life, especially in school. One tries to always compare oneself to similar others in terms of achievement, success, and failure. Acceptance by peers leads to more confidence in oneself and fosters positive attitudes and better academic performance. However, peer rejection may lead to self-doubt and fear of engagement in important activities. Therefore, trying to be cognizant of student leaders, classroom alliances, and peer most salient values so as to promote a positive climate among students is extremely important for teachers.

Student-teacher. The way students perceive their relationship

with their instructor can greatly influence their behavior and their academic performance. Instructors, who classify students as "A," "B," "C," "D," and "F" students based on the first test of the academic year, are doing a disservice to themselves, their students, their school, and their country as a whole. These classifications create perceptions and certain expectations which can impede the process of learning and assessment. The self-fulfilling prophesy theory is well documented and may well take place here on the part of instructors and students. Understanding these factors better prepare teachers to plan more meaningful instruction. The purpose, here, is using constructive criticism of students' achievement without dwelling on their negative side and engaging them in a supportive relationship with their instructor. This will not negatively affect students nor inhibit them from active future involvement and participation in school.

**D. Instructional factors**

Materials to teach. What to teach can greatly influence instruction. The ICC course is designed to increase understanding of diversity issues so as to value one's relationships and responsibility to different others. It is also a vehicle to identify elements of difference and similarity among various sub-cultural systems. This makes students more aware of racism, sexism, and various types of domination and oppression which may create barriers to effective communication and intercultural relations. Teaching students about similarities and differences among various cultures and subcultures will definitely affect their worldview.

Methods of instruction. How to teach can also influence student performance. In the ICC course, students are given a syllabus and are made aware that the syllabus is no more than a contract between me and them and that everyone is responsible to fulfill its conditions. Students are asked to share their opinions on various methods of instruction which can be used for added interest in subject matter. Whenever one method is not effective with students, another one may be tried to avoid being helpless and support successful instruction. Using certain types of media such as, computers, visual aids, films, overhead projectors, records, chalkboards, stories, drawings, pictures, typewriters, peer groups, etc. can help students concentrate on subject matters.

Relying on direct instruction wherein high level of student involvement takes place has been found very effective in the ICC course. Rosenshine (1978) explained that direct instruction consists of teaching activities focusing on academic matters wherein goals are clear to students; content coverage is extensive; student performance is monitored; questions are at a low cognitive level and produce many correct responses; and feedback to students is immediate and academically oriented. Direct instruction requires teachers to control instructional goals, choose appropriate material for the student ability level, and pace the instructional episode. Interaction should be structured, but not authoritarian, wherein learning may take place in a convivial academic atmosphere.

Evans, Evans, and Mercer (1986) identified and discussed five basic steps to follow in direct instruction. First, Advance

Organizers will enhance students' comprehension of material and prepare them for the instructional process. For instance, Giving students an outline of a lesson helps them to follow the sequence of instruction. Mercer and Mercer (1985) noted that an advance organizer should provide background information, motivate students to learn, identify topics or tasks, provide a structured framework for the class period, clarify required activity, introduce vocabulary, state and clarify concepts to be learned, and state expected outcome. Second, Modeling or Demonstration is a stage wherein the new skill is demonstrated for students from start to completion. Here students are encouraged to ask questions and model the skill in order to ensure that understanding has occurred after observing me perform the desired task. Third, Guided Practice is a stage wherein students practice the new skill with my help. Corrective feedback and verbal praise are desirable and very important at this stage. Fourth, Independent Performance is another stage allowing students to practice the new skill. This practice continues until the skill is mastered. Fifth, Generalization is the last stage occurring after the students have mastered the skill and are able to apply it to other tasks and situations.

Instructor personality. Personality characteristics of any teacher are extremely influential and ought to be considered. For instance, credibility is the key to successful teaching and influence. Promising or threatning students can work only when students believe that the teacher can and will deliver. When asked what they admired most in their teachers, the majority of students

identified the following characteristics: honesty, competence, openness, fairness, supportiveness, dynamism, enthusiasm, caring, and inspiring.

Instructor preferences. Factors concerning teacher preferences can also influence students performance. For instance, a teacher who applies the principal of relative equality in treating students is more influential than one who treats them otherwise. Respecting and accepting students as somewhat equal partners in the teaching and learning process are of utmost importance. However, showing students that the instructor knows all the answers about any topic is not an appropriate behavior nor does it help to establish a more supportive teacher-student relationship.

**E. Reinforcement Factors**

Smiling, informing students of good work, writing notes at the end of their assignments, telling them privately of certain things for improvement as well as encouraging quality work can influence students learning. Knowing that quality work is an important element in any career, students would be encouraged to keep a continuing focus on higher quality work throughout their college career and beyond. Objective evaluation of student work consists of using assessment that is based on widely discussed and understood standards of achievement. This can be very critical to gain an accurate picture of student achievement in a number of different assignments. Another key element of success in assessing student achievement is to tie student assessment to a long-term goal wherein active participation of faculty and students can occur. All

of these factors have to be considered when planning how to teach so instructional strategies can facilitate learning.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, assessment of student learning in the ICC course is an ongoing process. Various methods are used to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses, plan and adjust instruction, and provide feedback to students about their progress and achievement. A major emphasis in ICC assessment has been in the evaluation of basic ICC skills. These skills have served as the major underpinnings of cognitive and social skills for everyone and, therefore, are comprehensively assessed. Formal procedures of ICC assessment consist of quizzes, tests, oral reports, research papers, abstracting articles, and structured learning exercises that provide helpful information in adjusting instruction and improving students performance. Informal procedures of assessment consist of student observations in various settings and individual conferences with me. This helps me to plan and adjust materials for instruction.

Diagnosing students' strengths and weaknesses, informing them about progress, motivating them to focus on important skills, and planning and adjusting instruction constitute different types of assessment needs which can be satisfied through portfolio assessment. Tailoring assessment to curricula, instruction, and the educational needs of students have been more helpful than "one-shot" formal tests. Since classroom assessments have been designed to promote effective teaching and better learning, the quality of

education has greatly improved over time in ICC. This is evident in students' evaluations of the ICC class at the end of each term, the types of letters I receive from many of them, and the ongoing interaction I still have with several of them. Finally, individual, relational, environmental, instructional, and reinforcement factors affecting learning and assessment were identified as a result of using portfolio assessment. A major advantage of portfolios consists of looking at various aspects of students to find out what they know and can do. However, a major disadvantage of portfolios is lack of storage space for an extended period of time.

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**Student Checklist (Appendix A)**

Student Name:---------- Class:------ Months: 1st - 2nd - 3rd - 4th

Scale: 1 = poor; 2 = weak; 3 = good; 4 = very good; 5 = excellent

**A. Critical Thinking** **1----2----3----4----5**

1. Translates issues into manageable tasks with a clear purpose
2. Uses a variety of complex reasoning strategies
3. Interprets & synthesizes information
4. Uses a variety of information gathering techniques & resources
5. Accurately assesses value of information
6. Recognizes how to benefit from information

**B. Effective Communication** **1----2----3----4----5**

1. Expresses ideas clearly
2. Communicates w/diverse audiences
3. Communicates in a variety of ways;
4. Communicates for a variety of purposes
5. Creates high-quality products

**C. Cooperation** **1----2----3----4----5**

1. Works toward achieving group goals
2. Demonstrates effective IPC skills
3. Contributes to group maintenance
4. Performs a variety of group roles

**E. Personal Characteristics** **1----2----3----4----5**

1. Aware of own thinking; 2. Sensitive to feedback; 3. Open-minded
4. Sensitive to others' feelings; 5. Trustworthy; 6. Accurate/clear
7. Shows interest in ICC; 8. Applies ICC skills in interactions
9. Displays understanding of diff. others; 10. Engages in ICC SLEs